

Can't Buy Me Love

by I am Number 5

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Summary: Before Hiccup shoots down a Night Fury, he and Ruffnut are married off to each other. Witness awkward married life, dragons and the evolving of a relationship filled with pure crazy. Takes place before, during and after the movie.

## 1. Don't Care Too Much For Money

**\*\*Can't Buy Me Love - Chapter 1: Arranged Marriage Sucks\*\***

**\*\*Summary:\*\*** Before Hiccup shoots down a Night Fury, he and Ruffnut are married off to each other. Witness awkward married life, dragons and the evolving of a relationship filled with pure crazy.

**\*\*Warnings:\*\*** Angry Ruffnut and an awkward wedding

**\*\*Spoilers:\*\*** None

**\*\*Characters:\*\*** Hiccup, Ruffnut, Tuffnut Jr., Stoick, Tuffnut Sr., Astrid, Snotlout, Gobber, Gothi

**\*\*Word Count:\*\*** ~5,340

**\*\*Notes:\*\*** I have no idea where this came from. It's really bad but I don't care because I really like this idea.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup did not like the way his father was looking at him. It was that proud and excited look that scared him endlessly, and coupled with the fact that his father rarely smiled at him anymore, it meant that his father was happy about something concerning his only son.<p>

"Uh, Dad?" He asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Have a seat, son," Stoic said, gesturing to the chair in front of him. Deliberately wanting to make conversation with him? Yeah, something was definitely up.

"Is, uh, is something wrong?" Hiccup inquired as he sat down, brushing his pants off to busy his hands.

"Nay, nothing is wrong. In fact, everything is perfect! I have some good news, Hiccup." There was that gleam in his eyes. Hiccup's stomach dropped in dread; what did his father do? Was he being sold into slavery? Was he being sent to live on the other side of the island like Mildew?

"G-Good news? What kind of good news?"

Stoic linked his meaty fingers together and placing them on the table, clearly meaning business. "You're going to be turning sixteen in a few months, and this was going to happen sooner or later..."

Hiccup looked confused. "What do you mean?"

"I've been in touch with Tuffnut Thorston Sr.," Stoic continued. "His line of work has gotten him and his family into a rather dangerous situation, you see."

Tuffnut Thorston Sr. is well known for his bravery and fighting abilities, but also for his role as a peace-maker. He travels to the many islands that have a treaty with Berk with the traders and the chief and helps ensure that the peace is kept. He was part of the reason that the Bog Burglars have made peace with the Hairy Hooligans, for it was his idea to bring his only daughter Ruffnut with him to help convince him. There was also the fact that the Bog Burglars never stole from Berk out of sympathy for Berk's chief and their most peaceful warrior were both widows, left alone to take care of their children.

"His trip to the Berserker tribe went awry and he placed under the blame. His daughter's life and well-being has been threatened, and even with an entire family of men, she is not safe. The treaty hasn't been broken, and that is all that is keeping them away for now. That is why he was here yesterday, Hiccup. He is asking for the best protection his daughter can receive, and the best protection that she can get is being connected with the chief's family."

"I don't get it Dad, what are you trying to say?" Hiccup asked, shifting under his father's gaze.

"What I am trying to say is that you are getting married. To Tuffnut Sr.'s daughter."

Hiccup stumbled out of his chair. "What?! You're forcing me to get married?!"

"That is what I said, Hiccup. The Berserkers wouldn't dare break the treaty so close to winter, meaning we have enough time to give one of Berk's most trusted warrior's daughter the protection she

deserves."

"I can't believe you're doing this!" Hiccup exclaimed.

"Hiccup! Sit down and listen!" Stoic demanded.

Hiccup sat back down reluctantly, his head spinning wildly. Marriage? To Ruffnut Thorston? The craziest girl on the island?

"Now, I know this is a difficult thing to process, but this is for her safety and your future."

"My future?! How does my future come into play?!"

"Your future as the next chief!" Stoic said. "This will be your first step into manhood! We don't expect you to have offspring right away, not until you are older. You need to step up as my heir and own up to the fact that you have to get married sooner or later! This will be good for you."

"She's going to murder me!"

"Oh please, no she won't."

"Dad, you really don't understand," Hiccup waved his arms erratically. "She beats her twin up on a regular basis! She and Astrid train with each other! She grew up with five brothers and her dad! She is going to kill me in my sleep!"

"Hiccup," Stoic said, placing his hands on his son's shoulders. "My mind is made up. It's been settled. You are to be wed in three weeks."

Hiccup ran his hands through his hair in distress as his father stood and left the house.

Marriage. To Ruffnut Thorston.

This was his worst nightmare.

\* \* \*

><p>"You married me off?!"<p>

"Ruff, you have to understand that it's for your own good-"

"My own good?! No, you're doing this for your own personal gain! I hate you!"

"Ruffnut!"

Ruffnut ignored her father as she stormed up to her room, slamming the heavy oak door behind her. She growled in rage as she threw her helmet across the room, then snatching her sword off the wall and beginning to lash out at her bedpost. The sharp blade left several indents in the polished wood, but she couldn't care less. Her father married her off, and to Hiccup! Of all people he could have forced her to marry; it had to be the village screw up!

Her bedroom door swung open, but she was too busy whacking her

bedpost with her sword, grunting in sheer anger.

"Ruff?" Tuffnut stayed back, not wanting her to attack him with that sword.

"What!" She barked, pointing her sword at her twin.

"Are you okay?"

"Does it look like I'm okay?" Ruffnut demanded, gripping the hilt so tightly that her knuckles were turning white.

"Okay, stupid question," Tuffnut entered his sister's room cautiously. "I heard, by the way."

Ruffnut groaned and collapsed onto her bed, the sword falling to the floor with a clunk. She curled up into a ball, her knees pulled up to her chest as her shoulders started to shake.

"Oh crap, Ruff, are you crying?" Tuffnut felt panic rising. He had no idea how to deal with a crying girl - Ruffnut never cried.

"Shut up," Ruffnut croaked, hiding her face in the crook of her arm. She hated showing weakness, especially in front of her twin. But at this moment, she simply couldn't keep the tears hidden.

Tuffnut scooted closer and placed a surprisingly gentle hand on her shoulder. She sprang up and wrapped her arms tightly around her brother, burying her face in his clothed shoulder to muffle her sobs. He didn't mind a bit though, hugging her back and shushing her

"Hey, it's okay Ruff, you're going to be fine," he mumbled.

"I can't get married Tuff," she whispered. "I can't. I'm not ready."

"I can go kill the guy if you want," Tuffnut offered.

Ruffnut couldn't stop the smile that crept onto her face. "That would be great, but I don't think the chief would appreciate you murdering his heir."

Tuffnut's face scrunched up. "You're marrying Snotlout?"

"No," Ruffnut grouched. "The blood heir."

"Useless?!" Tuffnut exclaimed. "You're marrying him?!"

"Please don't remind me," she grouched. "I'd like to think about it as little as possible."

"Understood."

Ruffnut sniffled and pulled away, wiping the salty tears from her eyes. "Sorry about whining on you."

"Nah, it's fine."

Their father entered the room tentatively. "Ruff?"

"I have nothing to say to you," Ruffnut turned away from her father.

Tuffnut stood up and left, letting his father have a chance to talk to her. The door shut behind him, and the room was bathed in complete silence.

"Ruff, I am not doing this for my own personal gain. I would never treat you like a possession or a prize to be won. You know that I love you and that I would do anything to keep you safe. This marriage will be the only thing that can protect you."

"From what?!" She demanded.

"Some Berserkers are angry at me dear," he stated. "They've threatened your life. They've been planning to kidnap you and torture you, enslave you, and eventually kill you. I will not let that happen to you even if it kills me. The treaty hasn't been broken, meaning that they can't touch you, but marriage to Hiccup will protect you if the treaty ends up being broken. This is for your own safety and well-being."

Ruffnut stared at her father, and then moved to hug him around his shoulders. "I don't want to get married, Daddy."

"I know sweetie," he returned the hug. "I don't want you to get married either, but this is the only way. I will not lose my only daughter to the Berserkers."

"I didn't mean it," Ruffnut mumbled. "I don't hate you. I was just mad."

"I understand," Tuffnut Sr. replied. "Your mother was quite upset when we were betrothed as well. She actually hit me over the head with the butt of her sword when she got the chance."

Ruffnut snorted; she loved hearing stories about her mother. Her father and her four older brothers would always say that she was just like Hilda Thorston, in looks and personality. She had always taken pride in being like her mother, who had died bravely on the battlefield when she was a baby. She had vowed to live up to her mother's reputation and be a brave warrior like Hilda had been.

"And what about after you got married?" She asked, pulling away from her father and crossing her legs.

"Well, she wouldn't talk to me that much, unless it came with some sort of physical violence. It wasn't until about three months when she started talking to me civilly, and then...we fell in love. And then we had you and your brothers, and neither of us ever regretted it."

"That's nice," said Ruffnut. "But I'm not too sure that's going to happen with me."

"Well, you never know," Tuffnut Sr. pointed out. "He might surprise you."

She shrugged.

"Well, I've got a council meeting to get to," Tuffnut Sr. stood up, picking her helmet off the floor and placing it on her head. "I'll see you at dinner."

"Bye Dad."

\* \* \*

><p>News of the engagement had spread like a wildfire. Both Hiccup and Ruffnut avoided going outside for fear of seeing each other or receiving congratulations from the villagers. Hiccup especially didn't want to run into any of Ruffnut's brothers, not wanting to receive threats of bodily harm or death if he ever hurt their baby sister. Ruffnut didn't want to run into Snotlout or Dogsbreath and risk getting a ribbing from them (even though they knew better than to piss her off.)<p>

The first person outside of her family that Ruffnut talked to was Astrid. Ruffnut had snuck out of the house to Raven Point to brood and sharpen her spear. Astrid had sat down next to her, axe and wetstone in hand.

"Hey Ruff," she said.

"Hey," was her reply.

Beat.

"I'm going to try and avoid the topic that you're clearly not wanting to be mentioned, but I have no idea what to say."

"You can ask me about it if you want," Ruffnut stated, inspecting the tip of her spear. "I don't really mind."

"Did you dad ever say why he's marrying you off to Hiccup?" Astrid inquired, beginning to sharpen the blade of her axe.

"The Berserkers are after me apparently," Ruffnut replied. "He said the marriage is the best way to protect me."

"That makes sense. At least he's not marrying you off because Hiccup is Stoic's heir. It means he cares more about your safety."

Ruffnut hummed in agreement. "But still; marriage. To Hiccup."

"Yeah, I can't believe that's happening. Don't make him wet his pants too much."

The two snorted, then burst into uncontrollable laughter, collapsing onto their backs with their chests heaving. "I think that's the most I've laughed in days."

Astrid sat up and patted her shoulder. "I'm sure you'll be okay; I'm sure that once you get past the consummation, it'll be much less awkward."

Ruffnut froze. "Oh gods, I forgot about the consummation."

Astrid giggled. "And you're going to have to take a bath in front of

a bunch of married women and exchange vows and have him lead you across the threshold and-

"Okay, okay, I get it!" Ruffnut exclaimed, covering her ears. "I don't want to think about my forced marriage anymore."

"Sorry," Astrid said, punching her gently in the shoulder. "I should be giving you sympathy, if anything."

"Nah, it's fine. I'd be doing the same thing if you were getting married."

"That's nice to know," Astrid smirked, standing up.

Ruffnut groaned. "I have to pick up the sword for the ceremony in a bit. Want to come with me and carry me away if I go apeshit on Hiccup?"

"Sure," Astrid helped the other girl up and they set off for the village. "Just make sure you hit Snotlout and Dogsbreath if we see them; I've punched them enough for the past two weeks for making remarks."

"Oh, I plan to."

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup had been cooped up in the forge all day, working on project after project, trying to busy his hands. The wedding was in a week, and he was not prepared for it at all. He wasn't ready to spend the rest of his life with a girl who could beat him into submission without breaking a sweat.<p>

Gobber wisely avoided the topic of the wedding, not wanting his apprentice to get too irritated, and set to creating the bride's sword for the ceremony. Hiccup was just thankful that he didn't have to make the sword himself, but it still didn't change his mood. And it only worsened when he saw Astrid and his wife-to-be approaching the forge. In a fit of panic, Hiccup deliberately sliced the sharp blade across the palm of his hand.

"Oh geez, I'm bleeding, I'd better go take care of it," But Ruffnut entered the shop before he could make a run for it.

Their eyes met. Ruffnut did not have any hostility in her expression, only annoyance. They stared each other down for what seemed to be hours before Gobber (bless his soul) interrupted.

"Afternoon lassies," Gobber grunted. "Here ta pick up the sword, aye?"

Ruffnut nodded solemnly, tearing her eyes from Hiccups to dig into her pocket for the money her father had given her to pay for it.

"That's not necessary," Gobber said, handing her the sword. "Your father is the reason I'm still alive and kicking today. Consider it a gift."

Ruffnut looked surprised and a little touched, an expression that

Hiccup was sure no one was used to seeing on her. "Thanks, that's really nice of you."

"It's no trouble at all, lass," Gobber gave her a rare, yet genuine smile. "Hiccup, I'm going to pick up some ointment for that cut you've given yerself, be right back."

Hiccup's attention returned to his rapidly bleeding hand, and he yelped in realization. He cupped the bleeding slash with his other hand as the blood dripped onto the ground. He began to whistle to look calm, when he was really panicking on the inside.

He was so preoccupied with trying to stay calm, he almost didn't notice Ruffnut reach into her belt and pull out an old handkerchief and approach him. She took his bleeding hand and began to wrap it around his hand.

"I-uh, what are you doing?" Hiccup stuttered. Her fingers were calloused and rough, probably from all the combat training she's received, yet she was surprisingly gentle in handling his wound.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" Ruffnut snarked, tying the ends off. "Keep pressure on it, make sure it doesn't get dirty or it'll get infected."

"Oh, uh, thanksâ€¦" He muttered.

"Don't mention it."

After she left, he couldn't help but watch her from the window. Ruffnut had always been crass and rude and violent, and seemed pretty dumb, but not as dumb as her brother. She had always thrown things at him and tackled him at any given chance.

"Look," Hiccup yelped when he noticed Astrid was still standing there. "I know what you're thinking; you think that Ruffnut is boyish and rude and violent and stupid and that's all that she is, right? Well you're wrong; well, at least about some of it. Ruffnut is so much more than that. She's not dumb at all. She doesn't want this anymore than you do, and she's really afraid, believe it or not. But the only reason she hasn't run away to avoid it is because her dad married her off for her own safety. Being married to you means protection. Protect her the way she deserves to be, okay? At least give her that."

Astrid left, meaning Hiccup was alone with his thoughts once again.

\* \* \*

><p>Frigga's Day. The day of the wedding.<p>

Ruffnut sat up and scanned her room; this was the last time she would be waking up in here. The last time she would fight with Tuffnut at breakfast, but they would eventually get over it and he would braid her hair before they left, just like every other day. The last time she would wake up in her bed in the middle of the night because of a dragon raid. The last time she would have a room all to herself.



She didn't want to get up, but the knock at her door signaled that she wouldn't have a choice. "Get your butt up, Noboobs McGee!"

"I'm already up Tubby!" She barked, ignoring his indignant squawk. She rolled out of her bed for the last time, opened the door and kicked her brother in the stomach.

"Owwww," Tuffnut groaned. "That felt great."

Ruffnut snorted. "You would think so."

Tuffnut stood up and pulled his sister into a hug, ultimately surprising her. "Tuff?"

"I'm gonna miss you," he said, holding her even tighter.

"You'll still see me," Ruffnut pointed out quietly. "I'm just living in a different house. And will be married."

"It won't be the same," her brother said, releasing her. "Remind me to make sure Hatchet, Tor, Tarnish and Sidethorn to give many threats of bodily harm at the feast."

She snorted. "You do that."

"Ruff! Your grandmother wants to see you!"

Ruffnut sighed. "Bath time, it seems."

"Have fun," Tuffnut cackled, prompting his sister to punch him in the face, making sure he sees stars.

Ruffnut slunk downstairs, spotting her father sitting at the table. He smiled at her as she approached, standing to hug her. "Today's the day."

"Yep, bring on the torture."

Tuffnut Sr. smiled sympathetically. "I know this is hard for you, but Hiccup's a good lad. He'll treat you well, since he's too meek to treat you badly. You are a Thorston after all; don't let him walk all over you."

Ruffnut smiled. "I won't."

"Now go on," He encouraged her. "Your grandmother is waiting in the back room with your bath ready."

"Along with a dozen married women?" Ruffnut asked cheekily.

Tuffnut Sr. held his hands up innocently. "I didn't make up the traditions!"

Ruffnut wandered into the back room, almost groaning aloud at the sight of the many married women in her house. This was going to be just dandy.

Her grandmother gave her a cheeky smile, one similar to her own.

Yes, very much so.

\* \* \*

><p>The dress fit perfectly; it's beautiful. Her hair styled perfectly, her skin clean and smelling of flowers and herbs.<p>

She hated it.

She stared at the circlet in her hands; Gothi had handed it to her, saying that it was the very same circlet that Hilda wore to her own wedding. She raised it and was careful as she put it on, not wanting to damage something that her mother had worn. She lookedâ€|different. She didn't like wearing her hair down.

"Looking' good sis."

Ruffnut turned to glare at her eldest brother Hatchet. "Shut up Hatch, I can still break your kneecaps."

"I don't doubt it," Hatchet laughed. "But really, you look beautiful."

"Thanks," she mumbled, adjusting the dress feebly. She wasn't used to being complimented on her appearance. "I can't believe this is happening to me."

Hatchet wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "Hey, don't worry, it's not that bad. I'm married with a son and a kid on the way and I'm doing just fine."

"Yeah, but you aren't married to \_Hiccup\_, are you?"

"True, but he's really not that bad when he's not causing a mess."

"Okay, but when I trip over that threshold and that sword barely makes a dent in the wood, you're going to regret saying that."

"Whatever, I came to tell you that it's time to get going. It's starting soon."

Ruffnut nodded and went to retrieve the bouquet of wild flowers, freshly picked that morning. With one last longing look at her old room, she turned and followed her brother out of the house.

They were all dressed nicely; Tuffnut's hair was even pulled into a ponytail (probably Gothi's doing). They all stared at her in wonder, clearly almost not recognizing her.

"I know, I know, rub it in why don't you," she grumbled.

"You look beautiful," her father said, holding her shoulders so he could get a better look. "You look just like your mother on our wedding day."

Hatchet, Tor, Tarnish, Sidethorn and Tuffnut all nodded in agreement. "I can't believe our baby sister is getting married!" Tarnish exclaimed.

"She was five years old and biting everyone only a month ago!" Sidethorn shook his head.

"And don't worry, Hiccup will be receiving a good old traditional welcoming into the Thorston family," Tarnish smirked, cracking his knuckles.

Ruffnut snorted. "You guys are weird." She took her father's offered arm as they made their way to the ceremony.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup fidgeted nervously; he couldn't do this. He was going to forget the vows and he was going to fail at leading Ruffnut over the threshold and that sword is not going to make a dent in that pillar and he was going to embarrass himself tonight at theâ€|consummation. He was going to screw everything up.<p>

He felt like he was going to throw up.

Oh, how he wished that dragons would attack and put off the ceremony.

Gothi was closest to him, a goat present next to her. What if the goat is sacrificed? He did not want to see a goat killed at his wedding. No, he certainly did not.

The crowd quieted. Oh gods, it was starting.

Ruffnut's five year old nephew came first, carrying the ancestral sword that Gobber had made, then her five brothers, then Ruffnut, accompanied by Tuffnut Sr.

She looked so different. Her hair was down, with a circlet on her head that sort of reminded him of Astrid's headband â€" no. Don't think about Astrid.

Her dress was white with blue piping along the hem, neckline, waist, upper arms, and down the center of the skirt from the waist. Anyone could see that she had a much tighter grip on the bouquet than necessary, indicating that she was either terrified or ready to commit homicide.

Oh. She's right next to him. That was quick.

They didn't dare look at each other, instead pretending to pay attention to what Gothi was saying. The only time Gothi was ever capable of speaking was at weddings. They say that it is a gift from the gods that she is capable of speaking, though only at weddings.

Attention was suddenly placed on the sow. Gothi was holding a knife. Oh no.

"Oh gods, no, grandmother, please don'tâ€|" Ruffnut was muttering to herself. Oh yeah, Gothi was Ruffnut's grandmother.

He couldn't keep his eyes off the sow as its throat was slit. He cringed and saw Ruffnut do the same, only she was able to turn her

head away. Then Gothi placed a bowl to catch the blood of the now dead sow. The fir branch is being dipped into the bowl and was then being waved up and down, sprinkling both teenagers and the assembled guests.

"Ugh," he mumbled to himself, closing his eyes to avoid getting blood in them.

Taking a moment to collect himself, Hiccup then held the surprisingly light ancestral sword out to the girl. She took it gingerly, replacing her sword with Hiccup's. He took the hilt in his hand, then placing the ring that he had been holding on the hilt and holding the sword out to her. She paused, then took the ring and replaced it with the one she had been holding, and he took it in his hand.

Rings exchanged without a hitch. This was going much better than expected.

Their hands joined upon the sword's hilt; his hands were slightly bigger than hers, he observed.

Vows were exchanged. Cheers. Congratulations. His father lookedâ€|proud. More proud than he had ever seen him.

The easiest part was over.

\* \* \*

><p>Everyone ran off to the Great Hall for the feast, but Ruffnut lagged behind. She wasn't in much of a hurry. Tuffnut walked with her, both occasionally punching and shoving each other, just like every other day. Only, Tuffnut had to be careful not to make Ruffnut fall, otherwise her clothes would get dirty and they were pretty sure that was bad.<p>

When they arrived at the Great Hall, Tuffnut ran ahead and went inside. Hiccup blocked Ruffnut from entering, his new sword blocking the other door. He was clearly as nervous as Ruffnut felt.

"So I guess I justâ€|" He placed his hand on the door.

Ruffnut shrugged. "I guess so."

Hiccup eased the door open, stepping inside carefully, then holding his hand out to her uncertainly. She took his hand gently, then lifting her skirt slightly and carefully began to step over the lip in the doorway. She ignored the fact that everyone was watching them. She made it through without a single stumble, which was incredibly relieving. She would not appreciate the mutterings about a cursed marriage.

Hiccup seemed to be just as relieved as he released her hand. He had clearly been expecting it to go wrong, just as she had.

Snotlout then came up to Hiccup and patted his shoulder patronisingly. "Well cous, time to stab that pillar! Try not to screw up, yeah?"

Ruffnut backed away as Hiccup raised the sword, thinking for a brief moment, before switching the sword into his left hand. He took a deep

breath, before lunging forward to stab the pillar with the weapon. Gasps erupted from the crowd, even Ruffnut, when the sword sunk perfectly into the wood. It was quite impressive.

Cheers erupted and the village resumed with the feast. Stoic came over and patted his son on the shoulder, who still looked as if he'd seen Odin himself.

Gothi approached her and handed her a cup of mead, making sure that Ruffnut remembered to recite the formal verse before she gave Hiccup the cup. Ruffnut rolled her eyes and made her way over to her husband (she shuddered just from thinking about it) and cleared her throat.

"\_Ale I bring thee, thou oak-of-battle,  
>With strength blended and brightest honor;<br>'Tis mized with magic  
and mighty songs,  
>With goodly spells, wish-speeding runes.<em>\_"

She handed the cup unceremoniously to Hiccup, who took it shakily.

"To Odin," he said, before taking a sip and handing it back to her.

"To Freyja," she added, also taking a sip.

Tuffnut Sr. came over and shook Hiccup's hand, then making way for his five sons, who surrounded the poor boy with crazed gleams in their eyes.

Deciding that she didn't want to watch her brothers terrorize her husband, Ruffnut wandered off and sat down at a table. Astrid came up and sat down next to her, patting her back.

"It looks like your marriage is going to be a lucky one!" She teased. "How do you feel?"

"I feel disgusted by the fact that my grandmother sacrificed a sow at my wedding and sprayed its blood at me." Ruffnut groaned.

"Yeah, it got me too," Astrid said, plating some food. "At least the easy part is over now. All you have to worry about is the consummation."

Ruffnut rested her head on the table with a groan. A drunken brawl had already broken out behind them, and it didn't catch her attention for once. She had much bigger problems, like the fact that she had to having sex with Hiccup the Useless in front of a group of people that night.

"Just get ready for the blessings of fertility," Astrid pointed out.

"Oh gods," Ruffnut whined. "Why me?"

Hiccup was seated next to her, now pale and shaking from the threats of bodily harm that he had so obviously received.

"Sorry about them," she said, patting his shoulder. "It's kind of an

unspoken tradition in my family. They do that to every guy who marries a Thorston girl."

"Will they do that a lot?" Hiccup asked.

Ruffnut shrugged. "Depends. Avoid making me too emotional and you should be just fine."

"You have emotions?"

Many would assume that Ruffnut would hit him for making such a remark, but instead, she cackled.

As the feast went on, Ruffnut was dreading every minute that passed. The blessing of fertility and the dropping of the wooden hammer into her lap only further embarrassed her. She really wished she could just drop dead at this very moment so she wouldn't have to continue with this stupid marriage tradition.

\* \* \*

><p>The time came all too soon.<p>

Ruffnut had been led out of the Great Hall to be prepared, and then Hiccup was led out by his father, Uncle Spitelout and his cousin Snotlout. Great. Just great.

Thankfully, Snotlout was too drunk to attend the consummation, so his Aunt Seagrass was going instead. She sent her son home with a firm "You're drunk dear, go home and take a nap" to which Snotlout replied with a simple "Kay." And that was that.

His father, uncle and aunt were attending, as well as Ruffnut's father, Gothi and Ruffnut's Aunt Conch (yes, she was named after a type of seashell.) He was about to have sex with a crazy girl (who is now his wife) in front of their families.

Right now seemed to be a good time to panic.

He was led into his house, up the stairs and into his (and now Ruffnut's) room. She sat on the bed, dressed in a soft green nightgown that reached her knees. Her hair flowed over her shoulders in soft waves of blonde, her bangs swooping over her eye. She looked delicate. He had been positive that she would be waiting to murder him the second she saw him, but instead she sat with her back straight, her face void of any sort of aggression. She was playing with her wedding band, the shiny metal glinting in the moonlight.

Their eyes met; for the first time, they really saw eye to eye. They both knew for a fact that the following events were going to be humiliating.

This was only the beginning of an awkward marriage.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I know squat about Viking weddings, so I hope it wasn't too terrible.<strong>

**\*\*Information came from here: [www . vikinganswerlady dot com / wedding . shtml](http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/wedding.shtml)\*\***

**\*\*Ruffnut's dress: [pinterest dot com / pin / 174796029260063771](http://pinterest.com/pin/174796029260063771/)  
/\*\***

**\*\*Ruffnut's circlet: [pinterest dot com / pin / 209698926369816320](http://pinterest.com/pin/209698926369816320/)  
/\*\***

**\*\*Ruffnut's hair: [pinterest dot come / pin / 209698926369816342](http://pinterest.com/pin/209698926369816342/)  
/\*\***

**\*\*Hiccup's outfit: [pinterest dot com / pin / 209698926369816353](http://pinterest.com/pin/209698926369816353/)  
/\*\***

**\*\*I had to look for pictures. I just had to.\*\***

## 2. If It Makes You Feel Alright

**\*\*Can't Buy Me Love - Chapter 2: \*\***

**\*\*Chapter Summary:\*\*** The morning after, and then Hiccup bags a Night Fury a month later.

**\*\*Warnings:\*\*** Awkwardness, and a whole lot of it

**\*\*Spoilers: \*\*None**

**\*\*Characters:\*\*** Hiccup, Ruffnut, Stoick, Gobber, Toothless, Tuffnut, Snotlout, Astrid, Fishlegs

**\*\*Word Count:\*\*** ~4,079

**\*\*Notes: \*\***Super proud of how I handled this chapter and of how quickly I finished it. Yaaaay.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup woke up the next morning in a daze. His vision was blurred and uneven, the sunlight drifting into the room only making it much worse. He rolled onto his stomach and buried his face into his pillow; of the many things that Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III was, a morning person was definitely not one of them. He turned his head and blinked rapidly, trying to focus his vision on the wall. His room, as per usual.<p>

Suddenly, he remembered.

He's married. He has a wife. Ruffnut is his wife.

He is then painfully aware of the other presence in his bed. He lifted his head and peered at the other person in his bed, the first thing he noticed being the waves of blonde hair sprouting from her head. Ruffnut was well-known for her hair and her weapon-like form of styling them (they had always reminded him of bolas), yet he had never had such a close look at it. It looked well taken care of, soft and smooth. It was the only thing that distinguished her from her brother, as well as the only thing that was even remotely feminine about her.

He settled down onto his side and examined her; now that he was seeing her up close and personal, she really wasn't all she seemed to be. Her face was angular with a pointed chin, her jaw line soft, which was another thing that distinguished her from her brother. Tiny freckles dotted her cheekbones and over the bridge of her nose, reminding him that both of them were still so young. Dark, thick eyelashes fanned out over her cheekbones and her bangs slipped down over her eye.

They were still so young. Not even sixteen and they were married.

Sure, there had been many cases where twelve year olds have been married off, sometimes to much older men, but Hiccup couldn't help but think that he was much too young to be married. Hiccup couldn't help but wonder why marriage had to happen so early in life, or at all. Why couldn't marriage just simply be arranged when they aren't young and unprepared? Why couldn't the young people decide for themselves who they will marry?

Hiccup sighed and shifted onto his back, causing the blankets to slip further down and expose his chest. His bare chest. He was naked.

That must mean that Ruffnutâ€¦

Hiccup blushed deeply when his thoughts wandered into dirty territory. Gods, the consummation had been embarrassing, as expected. His father had told him beforehand that consummations were always like that, but he simply couldn't shake off the fact that his and Ruffnut's family had seen them naked and watched them have intercourse.

He didn't want to think about it. Instead he crept out of bed and put some clothes on, then carefully climbed back onto the bed with his sketchbook and began to put the finishing touches on his new invention. It was a contraption that would throw bolas with twice the amount of power than a regular Viking. This was definitely going to bag him a dragon and earn him some respect.

It was about a half hour later when Ruffnut finally woke up. She stirred and rolled onto her back, stretching and working out the kinks - Hiccup definitely heard her spine crack a few times. Her hand wandered up to rub at her eyes, then run through her messy locks to push the strands out of her face. Her blue eyes scanned the room slowly, realization dawning on her face before her head snapped towards him.

"Morning," Hiccup mumbled feebly, averting his eyes.

"Morning," she replied. She reached up to scratch her shoulder, causing the blanket to slip down and expose her bare shoulder. She paused before exhaling. "I'm naked."

"Yes, I'd say so," Hiccup said, trying to keep his attention on his layout of the invention.

She looked at him with annoyed expectation. "Do you mind?"



"Huh?"

"Get me some clothes, dimwit."

"Oh, uh, okay then." Hiccup snapped the sketchbook shut and stood up to look through the wardrobe that had been added to the room. "Did you want anything specific?"

"The long blue tunic and the green pants, I guess," Ruffnut received the clothes and stood up to get dressed. Her hair thankfully covered everything as far as Hiccup could see, but he still blushed and looked away. He sat back down on the bed and crossed his legs, not even looking up when Ruffnut made her way to the wardrobe and rummaging through it.

She pulled out a leather belt that she fastened around her waist, as well as a thin fleece vest that she tugged on with a little difficulty because of her hair. A pair of leather knee-length boots completed the outfit.

She was wearing married woman clothes â€" sophisticated and good-quality, but easy to maneuver in for fighting and training.

Ruffnut sat down on the bed and tucked a leg under her knee, a hairbrush in her hand. She began to brush it through the soft locks, taking her time in getting rid of the knots. When she finished, she began to part it for her braids.

Hiccup couldn't help but stare at her skilled fingers as they moved swiftly, without a single loose strand or fold out of place. It was a long process, but the fishtail braid came out perfectly, and now hung over her shoulder.

"You're good at that," Hiccup muttered.

Ruffnut looked surprised at his compliment. "Uh, thanks."

The two sat in silence. Hiccup tapped his charcoal pencil against the page, trying to decide if he should say anything. Ruffnut bit her lip as she drummed her fingernails against the bedframe.

"Now what?" Ruffnut inquired.

Hiccup shrugged, shaking his head. "I have no clue."

Beat.

"Look, I know you don't like me and all, but if this is going to work out for both of us, we need to talk about allâ€¦\_this\_. Right?"

Ruffnut sighed. "Yeah, I guess."

Hiccup closed his sketchbook and put it aside. "This is going to be incredibly awkward for both of us if we don't settle things once and for all."

Ruffnut nodded in agreement. "So, um, do you wanna go

first?"

"Sure," Hiccup crossed his legs. "Uh, to be honest, you scared the living Hel out of me. You still do, sort of. I never hated you, not really, but I tried to avoid you as much as possible. You have a nasty right hook. But I really want this to work. I want you to be safe and happy because you deserve it. I don't want you to hate me or anything. I just â€" you get what I'm trying to say, right? I just want this to work."

Ruffnut nodded. "Thanks, that'sâ€|really nice of you to say. But I never hated you."

Hiccup's eyes widened. "You didn't? Not even a little bit?"

She shook her head. "I didn't even know you other than the fact that you're a smartass who breaks things a lot. I mean, who am I to judge, right?"

"T-Then why did you pick on me all the time?"

"I do that to everyone," Ruffnut pointed out. "I treat everyone exactly the same; with hostility and a fantastic touch of violence, unless you're Tuffnut. So yeah, I never hated you; I just treat you like I treat everyone. Case closed."

Hiccup couldn't even believe he was hearing this coming from Ruffnut Thorston's mouth.

"I want this to work out too, strangely. If I'm going to spend the rest of my life married to you, then we might as well make it as easy as possible."

She smiled genuinely, and he smiled back as well. He had expected her to hide a knife under her pillow and kill him in his sleep, but instead she's smiling and being quite civil with him. This was going so much better than expected.

\* \* \*

><p>The first month passed without any problems. The first week after the wedding, Hiccup had received five punches to the arm from Ruffnut's brothers, which were bruised terribly. He and Ruffnut had received endless congratulations that irritated Hiccup, and they clearly irritated her too. Though they never spoke too often, they were civil with each other. Hiccup spent most of his time working on his inventions in the smithy, and Ruffnut either spent it with her twin or training with Astrid. At night, they would occasionally make small talk before bed, and Hiccup would always secretly watch her undo her hair and brush it out. It wasn't perfect, not even close, but it was better than Ruffnut being hostile and rude to him and him spilling out a sarcastic comment that would make her angry and knock him out. It was better this way.<p>

One night, Hiccup was sitting at the table with his sketchbook in his lap, making idle doodles as Ruffnut sharpened her spear in front of the fire. They didn't say anything until Ruffnut turned around to look at him.

"Hiccup?"

He raised his head. "Yeah?"

"Umâ€¦" She placed her spear down, biting her lip in discomfort. "You know, one dayâ€¦one day, the adults expect us to have kids. And I justâ€¦I don't even know. This is what they expect us to do and I don't think either of us will be able to survive the awkwardness of having sex again, you know? I don't even know if I'm able to have kids in general, I mean, my hips are pretty narrow."

Hiccup averted his eyes to ensure that he didn't look at her hips. "I-I never thought about that."

She hummed. "Me too."

"Wellâ€¦I'm sure they'd understand. Like, we're still way too young to have kids, and we have a few years to get everything sorted out. Don't worry about it." He gave her a reassuring smile that made her smile hesitantly.

"It's justâ€¦the thought of having kids kinda freaks me out. I'm way too skinny to have them, my sister-in-law almost died when she gave birth."

"Hey, she almost died. Come on, you were born and raised on an island with the harshest winters and even harsher people. I mean, this is Berk; it's twelve days north of Hopeless and few degrees south of Freezing-to-Death. It's located solidly on the Meridian of Misery. Our village; in a word, sturdy. It's been here for seven generations and yet every single building is new. We have fishing, hunting, and a charming view of the sunsetsâ€¦the only problems are the pests." A series of shouts erupted from outside the house, and Hiccup stood up to take a look. "You see, most places have mice of mosquitos, we have â€œ"

When he opened the door, a Monstrous Nightmare was barreling straight towards him. He yelped and shut the door to avoid being burnt to a crisp, flames escaping through all sides of the door. "Dragons." He breathed. "Dragon attack!"

Ruffnut sprang up from her seat and tugged her vest on. "I've got fire patrol. Try not to break the village, yeah?"

Hiccup laughed sarcastically. "Oh, I'll do my absolute best."

"Good," she cackled. "See you later!"

Hiccup ran out right after her, ducking and dodging the adults and the incoming dragons, all the while ignoring the shouts directed towards him, telling him to go back inside. He never paid them any mind. Why would he need to? It was his duty to work in the forge, after all. Everyone, even his own father, seem to forget.

His father yanked him back by his vest and held him like a lioness held her cubs. "What is he doing out?! What are you doing out?!"

"The forge, Dad, I tell you this every single dragon raid that you catch me outside."

"Where's Ruffnut?"

"Fire patrol."

Stoick nodded in understanding. "Get inside before you break something."

Hiccup rolled his eyes and saluted. "Thanks Dad, love you too."

When he arrived at the forge, Gobber was already hammering away at a sword. "Oh, nice o' you to join the party; I thought you'd have been carried off."

"Wha æ" who, me? Nah, come on, I'm way too muscular for their taste," he said as he hauled Gobber's mace attachment and hung it on the wall. "They wouldn't know what to do with all this." He gestured to his limp and unsatisfactory biceps.

"Well, they need toothpicks, don't they?" Gobber asked cheekily.

Hiccup snorted, then moved to throw the counter doors open to accept weapons from warriors. It was difficult and tiresome, but he was used to it by now. As he worked, he heard the oh-so-familiar sound of Astrid giving out orders. Poking his head out the window, he scanned for the fire patrol.

Ah, there they were.

Fishlegs, Snotlout, Astrid, Ruffnut and Tuffnut. Everyone was there.

One day, Hiccup thought to himself as he watched them go by. One day, I'll be there too. Once I'm capable of holding a bucket of water without falling on my face.

His newest invention could very well be his ticket into a higher rank. A contraption that shoots bolas at great distances so he, and everyone else who is incapable of fighting, won't have to. It would surely earn him some respect and approval around here. And when Gobber left the forge to help out, Hiccup saw his chance and took it gratefully.

Time to bag a dragon.

\* \* \*

><p>He finally bagged that dragon, a <em>Night Fury</em>. But he also managed to get chased by a Monstrous Nightmare and had to be save by his father once again, and the entire village saw the whole thing. That included his wife, brothers-in-law, father-in-law, and the fire patrol.

How embarrassing.

When his father was finally finished ranting at him, he gestured to Gobber. "Make sure he gets there. I have this mess to clean up."

As Gobber slapped him across the head and led him away, they had to

pass the fire patrol.

"Quite the performance," Tuffnut snickered.

"I've never seen anyone mess up that badly. That helped!" Snotlout chortled, leaning forward to emphasise his statement.

"Thank you, thank you, I was trying," Hiccup snarked as he trudged away. Astrid watched the exchange with an indifferent look, and Fishlegs looked very uncomfortable. Gobber shoved Snotlout to the ground by his head " Ruffnut watched silently, before sighing and walking across Snotlout's chest to follow them.

"Have fun with your loser husband!"

Ruffnut whipped around and marched back, delivered a swift kick to the arrogant boy's groin, then turned and went back.

The walk was relatively silent besides the crunch of dirt under their feet, and the clunk of Gobber's fake leg. None of them looked at each other, nor did they say a word, until they approached the house.

"I really did hit one," Hiccup stated.

"Sure you did," Gobber replied.

"But he never listens-"

"Oh, it runs in the family."

"-And when he does it's always with this disappointed scowl, like somebody skimped on the meat in his sandwich." He turned and began to imitate his father's thick accent. "Excuse me, barmaid, I'm afraid you've brought me the wrong offspring. I ordered an extra large boy with beefy arms, extra guts and glory on the side. This here, this is a talking fishbone\_!"

Ruffnut couldn't help it; she snorted loudly, but covered her mouth when they stared at her. "Sorry, sorry, but that was a really funny impression."

"That's me, the comedy genius," said Hiccup.

She hummed. "Mmkay, I'm going to bed. Night."

"Night," the two men chorused as Ruffnut opened the front door and closed it behind her.

"Now, you're thinking about this all wrong," Gobber said to his apprentice. "It's not so much what you look like, it's what's inside that he can't stand."

Hiccup stared incredulously. "Thank you for summing that up."

"Look, the point is stop trying to be something you're not," Gobber said in a sage-like tone of voice.

"I just want to be one of you guys," Hiccup pointed out sadly, before opening the door and entering his house. Once the door was closed and he heard the blacksmith hobble away, he crept up the stairs to see if

Ruffnut had fallen asleep yet.

She had.

Silently cheering in his head, he went back down the stairs and headed out the back door. He was going to find that Night Fury, even if it was the last thing he did.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup grumbled and kicked at the dirt; of course he would lose a dragon in the woods. Why wasn't he in the least bit surprised? He stared at the map of the island drawn in his sketchbook and tried to mark a few more estimations of where the dragon had landed. Eventually, he gave up and scribbled angrily across the page.<p>

"The Gods hate me," he grumbled himself. "Some people lose their knife or their mug, no, not me, I manage to lose an entire dragon!" In a fit of frustration, he slapped at a tree branch. But luck just wasn't on his side today (or ever) and the branch swung back and slapped him in the face.

His eyes wandered to the scenery, and caught the fallen tree that the branch was attached to, then to the area in front of him. Trees tipped over, a large ditch dug into the dirt, as if something had fallen and skidded, that led over the hill ahead. Curiosity was one of his greatest curses, so he obviously needed to investigate it. He tumbled through the mess and got on his knees and crawled up to take a peek over the hill. gasped and crouched out of sight when the first thing he spotted over that hill was a massive black body with wings.

The Night Fury.

Nerves wracking his body, he pulled his tiny dagger from inside his vest with shaking hands. Knees wobbling, he crept over the hill and tumbled down behind a rock. Breathing heavily, he shuffled to his right to get a better look at the beast he had caught. It wasn't moving.

"Oh wowâ€|I-I did it. Oh, I did, this fixes everything! Yes!" he laughed. "I have brought down this mighty beast!" As he said this, he placed his boot on the dragon's leg and yelped when it jostled its limb. He tumbled back into the rock, his heavy breathing returning with gusto.

Still alive.

Hiccup stood on shaky knees, staring the dragon in the face. Its eyes were a piercing acid green that made a shiver crawl up his spine, a feeling he hated. "I'm going to kill you dragon...I'm going to cut out your heart and take it to my father. I am Vikingâ€|\_I am a Viking\_!"

He had no idea why he was talking and shouting at it, it probably didn't understand him anyway.

Hiccup raised the knife above his head, preparing to plunge it into the beast's flesh. But his eyes fluttered open and landed on the

Night Fury's face; it stared back in obvious fear, but undaunted, and soon made a defeated noise and lowered its head to the ground. He struggled to get his previous mindset back, but the look the Night Fury had given him was burned into his eyelids. It reminded him so much of a lost child, orâ€¦maybe just himself.

His arms fell to his sides in defeat.

" I did thisâ€¦" he whispered.

He turned and prepared to leave it, but hesitated; he could always release itâ€¦

Confidently, he took the ropes in hand and began to cut them away. One by one, they fell loosely over the dragon's body, and at the opportune moment, it pounced on him like a giant cat.

He panted and tried to back away as far as he could, but it just kept coming closer. Hiccup stared into its eyes, fear evident in his own, then letting his head fall back against the rock and turned away from it. If he was going to die, he didn't want to be staring into the face of his killer.

RRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAA AAARRRRRRRRRRRRR

Hiccup cringed and slid further onto the ground, trying to get away from the terrible noise. When it stopped and he opened his eyes, the dragon backed away and soared into the trees, out of sight.

Shocked and startled, he stood on shaky knees and made an attempt to walk away from the area. He only made it about five steps before he groaned and collapsed face-first into the dirt.

\* \* \*

><p>Ruffnut didn't leave the house for the rest of the day, not wanting to face any embarrassment from her tribe. The exhaustion from that morning and the lack of sleep only further encouraged her to stay in.<p>

Staying in turned out to be a great idea, as she had a lot of time to simply relax and avoid any stress from everyday life as a married sixteen year old who simply wants a little privacy now and then. Tuffnut had tried to get her out of bed by throwing rocks at the window, to which she responded by throwing one of Hiccup's old daggers at him. He left her alone after that.

She was carving arrows out of branches when she heard the front door open and close, then footsteps beginning making their way up the stairs; Hiccup was home, obviously.

"Hiccup."

"Oh, Dad. Uh, I have to talk to you Dad."

"I need to speak with you too, son."

Ruffnut could smell an awkward conversation arising from the upstairs area.

"I've decided I don't want to fighting dragons-"

"I think it's time you learned to fight dragons-"

"What?"

Ruffnut covered to mouth to muffle her snort.

"You go first-"

"No, no you go first."

"Alright. You got your wish: dragon training â€" you start in the morning."

Ruffnut's eyes widened and her laughter only increased with her dread. Oh, this would just be a recipe for disaster.

"Oh man, I should've gone first. 'Cuz I was thinking, you know, we have a surplus of dragon fighting Vikings, but do we have enough bread-making Vikings or small home repair Vikings-"

"You'll need this-" Stoick obviously dropped a weapon in Hiccup's arms judging by Hiccup's grunt of struggle.

"I don't want to fight dragons!"

Well, that was a first.

"Oh come on, yes you do!"

"Rephrase: Dad, I can't kill dragons."

That was an understatement.

"But you will kill dragons."

"No, I'm really, very extra sure that I won't."

"It's time, Hiccup\_."

"Can you not hear me?!"

"This is serious, son. When you carry this axe, you carry all of us with you. Which means you walk like us, you talk like us, you think like us. No more of â€" this."

"You just gestured to all of me\_."

Ruffnut buried her face in her pillow to smother her laughter and cover her red face; this was too good.

"Deal?"

"This conversation is feeling very one-sided-"

"Deal?"

A sigh.



"Deal."

"Good. Train hard; Ruffnut will be there too, so watch out for each other. I'll be backâ€|probably."

"And I'll be hereâ€|maybe."

The door shut and the house was bathed in silence. Ruffnut was still snickering into the pillow when Hiccup entered their room.

"I going to assume that you heard all of that, judging by the fact that you look like you broke your spleen from laughing."

Ruffnut's cackle dissolved into a coughing fit, which then dissolved back into laughter.

"Yeah, yeah, laugh it up. I am here for your comedic pleasure." Hiccup grumbled, climbing into bed next to her.

"Both of you claim that you have nothing in common," Ruffnut said, wiping the tears of laughter off her cheeks. "But just from hearing that conversation, I disagree. A lot."

"Ugh."

Ruffnut blew out the candle and they both shuffled underneath the covers, trying to get comfortable.

"Soâ€|Dragon Training, huh?"

"Uh, yeah, apparently. Do you think Gobber will notice if I neglect to show up and hide in a really inconspicuous place?"

"Probably. Nothing gets past Gobber except for the left socks that the trolls steal. Why does he even have left socks in the first place? He doesn't even have a left foot."

Hiccup paused and sat up in thought.

"What?"

Hiccup turned to look at her with wide eyes. "How have I not noticed that?!"

They looked at each other, paused, then burst out laughing all over again.

They have never gotten along this well, and she couldn't help but enjoy it.

### 3. I'll Get You Anything, My Friend

**\*\*Chapter Summary:\*\*** Hiccup tells Ruffnut about his encounter with the Night Fury and the situations begins to raise some questions.

**\*\*Warnings:\*\*** N/A

**\*\*Spoilers:\*\*** N/A

**\*\*Characters:\*\*** Hiccup, Ruffnut, Gobber, Astrid, Tuffnut, Snotlout, Fishlegs

**\*\*Word Count:\*\*** ~2,326

**\*\*Notes:\*\*** Zooweemama, this took longer than I intended. So there's been a slight change of plans concerning this series, and I will not be covering Riders of Berk and Defenders of Berk like I had originally planned. I don't have much time on my hands and I want this to be as pleasant as possible. Sorry! I hope you enjoy the chapter though! It's not very long, but I tried my best.

\* \* \*

><p>The next morning, Hiccup woke to a cold, wet hand to the face.<p>

The scent of fish met his nostrils as he shot up in bed, sputtering in indignation. Ruffnut, who stood off to the side, cackled at his reaction.

"Wakey wakey!" She exclaimed. "Dragon Training today!"

Hiccup ignored the statement as he wiped his face with his hand and sniffed it. His face immediately scrunched up as he shuddered.

"Did you slap me in the face with \_fish grease\_?" He demanded, completely disgusted.

"Yep!" Her footsteps traveled out the door and down the stairs. "Hurry up and get dressed! We have to get there early or Gobber will hang us by our toenails!"

"Don't I know it," He muttered to himself, stretching to work the kinks out of his back. Today was to be eventful, that was for certain. He prayed to Odin that it wouldn't be the bad kind.

\* \* \*

><p>The first day of Dragon Training had been a disaster, as expected.<p>

Not only had they been taken by surprise when Gobber released a Gronkle into the arena without any warning, they had all embarrassed themselves one way or another. Snotlout tried and failed to flirt, Fishlegs stopped paying attention, Hiccup looked away for one moment (which was all it took, essentially) and Ruffnut and Tuffnut fought over one shield when there were plenty other shields to choose from.

Ruffnut had concluded that the events of that morning had never happened and they were not to be mentioned ever again. That was typically how she handled embarrassing situations nowadays, it seemed. It was how she was dealing with the embarrassment of hers and Hiccup's consummation, so it was working quite decently.

As she turned to leave, a hand grasped her forearm to tug her back.

"I need to talk to you about something," Hiccup whispered to her.

Ruffnut nodded and crossed her arms. "What's up?"

"Uhâ€¦" He rubbed the back of his neck. "I think it would be easier to show you."

"Show me what?" She inquired curiously.

"Can I trust you to keep a secret?"

She nodded.

"Okay, follow me."

He led her deep into the woods, to a small clearing just past Raven Point. What lay there was a path of destroyed trees and a pile of ropes with two stones tied to them. Her confusion only grew.

"What is all this?" She asked.

Hiccup sighed. "Okay, so remember how I said that I caught a Night Fury?"

She nodded.

"Okay, so I came out here yesterday to find it. And I did! It was black with green eyes and it was a lot smaller than I had thought it would be."

"Hiccup, are you being serious or are you trying to bullshit me?"

"What else could have caused all that destruction?" He asked matter-of-factly.

She paused. "Good point. Continue."

"Right." Hiccup coughed. "So I found it and I was going to kill it, butâ€¦I didn't. I couldn't. What honour is there in killing something that can't fight back, right? So Iâ€¦I set it free."

"You did what?" Ruffnut exclaimed. "How are you still alive?!"

"That's the thing. It had me pinned, it could have killed me easily, butâ€¦it didn't. It roared in my face and disappeared. That's it. It didn't kill me, it didn't even wound me a little! Remember what Gobber said about a dragon always going for the kill? That can't be true thoughâ€¦if a dragon always went for the kill, that Night Fury would have gotten rid of me. So why didn't it?"

Ruffnut pondered over this. "â€¦You're right. There has to be something we're missing here."

Hiccup began to wander further into the woods, continuing to talk as he went. "I mean, I don't doubt that dragons will go for the kill, there are many dragons that will. But it doesn't make sense. The Night Fury was fully prepared to put me out of my misery, but for

some reason I'm still alive. I want to know why."

The two wandered until they reached a secluded cove. The sun was gleaming into the area, shining on the water of the pond and only making the area look prettier.

"Well, this was stupid," Hiccup muttered.

"Nah," She replied. "Thanks for trusting me with something like this. Itâ€¦it means a lot."

"Thanks for being trustworthy," He smiled.

A large, black blur whizzed past them, making the pair jump and fall backwards onto their rears. What they both saw caused their eyes to bug and their jaws to drop. They saw a dragon with scales as black as night trying to claw its way up the too smooth walls of the cove, but it slipped downwards, turned around, and glided over the lake before crashing roughly to the ground.

Hiccup, not believing his eyes, had to get closer. He crouched down and jumped onto a rounded platform that proved to be quite convenient, and almost slid off the side.

"Hiccup!" Ruffnut hissed, sounding both surprised and panicked. The auburn haired boy looked at her and motioned for her to come forth as well. She bit her lip in hesitance, but relented and joined him on the rock. They both watched as the Night Fury once again tried in vain to escape its stone prison.

Hiccup hastily pulled out a journal and began to sketch the struggling beast as best as he could. Ruffnut, however, had her eyes fixed on the dragon below them. She never would have imagined the dreaded Night Fury would look quite like this. It was much smaller than she expected, and though it was terrifying knowing how dangerous it was, the dragon was strangely beautiful to look at. Knowing that the dragon had spared her husband's life made it seem much less harmful than it would have if it hadn't.

"Why don't you justâ€¦fly away?" Hiccup mused, mostly to himself.

"Maybe he can't," Ruffnut stated, pointing to the dragon's tail. "Look!"

Sure enough, the Night Fury was missing a fin on its tail. No doubt it was throwing off the dragon's flight and making it impossible for it to escape and fly home.

Hiccup pursed his lips together and rubbed one of the tailfins in his drawing away, smudging the charcoal across the page and on his skin.

The pair watched as the beast approached the small lake and attempted to catch a fish that must have been lurking in there. It was quite pathetic, seeing such a powerful creature not being able to catch a simple fish, and it made Ruffnut's heart clench a little. She pitied it, she realized. She pitied a creature that she was raised to hate.

Hiccup, on the other hand, had been so preoccupied watching that he failed to notice his charcoal stick slip out of his grasp until it was too late. Both of them made an attempt to grab it, but failed, and it bounced off the rock with a clatter and fell to the ground below them. This caught the Night Fury's attention. It raised its dark head and locked on the boy and girl that had been observing it. The two froze, afraid that it would attack them and not have mercy on them like it had before, but nothing happened. It merely watched them, almost curiously. Hiccup leaned forward a little, and Ruffnut tilted her head in wonder, and the dragon copied them simultaneously.

The three stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity until the two humans realized they were late for their evening lesson. As they left, they could still feel the gaze of the Night Fury lingering on them.

\* \* \*

><p>By the time they reached the Great Hall, the rain had only gotten worse. Hiccup had tried to offer his vest to Ruffnut at one point, but it only granted him a punch to the arm and a shake of her head. The trek up the stairs had been quick, as the two were cold and wet and hungry, desperate for the warmth from the fire. Once the two were inside, Ruffnut began to squeeze the excess water from her hair as they wandered to the table in the center of the hall, where the rest of their class was.<p>

"All right," said Gobber. "Where did Astrid go wrong in the dragon ring today?"

"I mistimed my somersault-dive." said Astrid. "It was sloppy. It threw off my reverse tumble."

Ruffnut rolled her eyes; leave it to Astrid to pick out the simplest and least important detail of her performance.

"No, no, it was great, it was so Astrid," Snotlout said, being the kiss-ass he always was.

"She's right, you have to be tough on yourself!" Gobber stated, before he finally noticed the two approaching the table. "Well, look who decided to join the party!"

"Woohoo, the party clearly doesn't start until we walk in," said Hiccup as he brushed the water off his vest.

"Where were you two? Making out on Raven Point?" Snotlout grinned smugly.

"Why, are you jealous?" Ruffnut asked, ignoring Hiccup's indignant sputter.

A small flush appeared on Snotlout's cheeks. "N-no!"

"Anyway," Gobber continued. "Where did Hiccup go wrong?"

"He showed up?" Snotlout piped up as he scooted across the bench to prevent Hiccup from sitting there.

"He didn't get eaten?" Tuffnut supplied.

"He's never where he should be," Astrid stated indifferently.

"Thank you, Astrid." said Gobber, as he discretely hit the back of Tuffnut's head as a reminder for him to watch his mouth. Ruffnut not-so-discretely placed a hand on Snotlout's face and shoved him out of his seat. She then rounded the table to shove her brother down the bench to make way for her, motioning for Hiccup to follow her. The auburn haired boy hesitated, but eventually sat down next to her, back stiff, clearly not used to sitting at a table with this many people.

"You need to live and breathe this stuff." Gobber continued, pulling out a worn book with a spiraling dragon on the cover. The man cleared away some dishes off the table and set the book down in their place. "The Dragon Manual. Everything we know about every dragon we know of."

A clap of thunder boomed outside, making their teacher sigh. "No attacks tonight. Study up."

"Wait!" said Tuffnut, surprised as he dropped his dagger. "You mean read?" he asked.

"While we're still alive?" said Ruffnut incredulously. Hiccup gave her a wide-eyed look that could be translated to "wait what you don't like to read how am I married to you".

"Why read words when you can just kill the stuff the words tell you stuff about?" asked Snotlout imprudently as he pounded a fist onto the table.

"Oh," Fishlegs piped up. "I've read it like seven times. There's this water dragon that sprays boiling water at your face!" While Fishlegs's knowledge of dragons can be useful, he can sometimes let out way more information than needed. "And-and there's this other one that buries itself for like a week-"

Fixing him with a bored expression, Tuffnut raised a hand to motion for him to silence himself.

"\_Yeah, that sounds great. Now there was a chance I was going to read thatâ€¦"

"But now?" Ruffnut finished, looking thoroughly unimpressed.

"You guys read; I'll go kill stuff." Snotlout said as he stood up to strut out of the hall. Tuffnut shoved his twin's face into the table, using her as leverage to stand up.

"Hey!" Ruffnut yelped. Tuffnut merely gave her an innocent look that pissed her off.

"See you tomorrow?" Astrid said to the female twin as she stood up to leave.

Ruffnut nodded. "Yeah, totally."

Husband and wife were left in silence.

"So," Hiccup started. "Do you want to read it? Together?"

"Nah," the blonde replied, placing an elbow on the table and putting her chin in her palm. "You can read it to me."

Hiccup wanted to protest, but he quickly realized that there was no use arguing with her. "Fine."

The boy pulled the book closer and flipped it open.

"Dragon Classifications: Strike Class, Fear Class, Mystery Class." He turned to the next page. "Thunderdrum: This reclusive dragon inhabits sea caves and dark tide pools. When startled, the Thunderdrum produces a concussive sound that can kill a man at close range. Extremely dangerous. Kill on sight."

"You know, when you think about it, a Thunderdrum's mouth is about as big as Snotlout's ego," Ruffnut said with a grin. Hiccup couldn't help but grin, but managed to suppress a laugh.

"Timberjack: This gigantic creature has razor-sharp wings that can slice through fully-grown trees. Extremely dangerous. Kill on sight."

"Scauldron: sprays scalding water at its victims. Extremely dangerous-" An earsplitting clap of thunder sounded through the Great Hall. The two jumped and Ruffnut accidentally scooted closer to her husband without realizing it.

Hiccup skimmed through the pages, reading out the names and abilities, and noticed how every page held the words "Extremely dangerous, kill on sight". It was almost unnerving. He continued through the book, Ruffnut occasionally putting in some input, until they reached the one page that they truly wanted to see.

"Night Fury." Hiccup breathed. "Speed: Unknown. Size: Unknown. The unholy offspring of lightning and death itself. Never engage this dragon. Your only chance is to hide and pray that it doesn't find you."

Hiccup silently pulled out his journal, opened to the page where he'd sketched the dragon, and laid it atop the nearly blank page.

"This makes absolutely no sense," Ruffnut stated, twirling a flyaway strand of hair around her finger.

"I agree," Hiccup nodded, closing both books. "Should we should we go back tomorrow? After class?"

"Sure, if you want to," the blonde yawned. "We should go home. It's getting late."

The pair left the hall and ran through the rain to make it home without getting too wet. As they readied for bed, they remained silent. Tomorrow would only be the start of an amazing journey.

**\*\*Can't Buy Me Love - Chapter 4: I'll Give All I Got to Give\*\***

**\*\*Chapter Summary:\*\*** Hiccup is a nerd, Ruffnut is emotionally constipated, and Toothless is fucking adorable.

**\*\*Warnings:\*\*** Mild cursing

**\*\*Characters:\*\*** Ruffnut, Hiccup, Toothless, Gobber, Astrid, Fishlegs, Tuffnut, Snotlout

**\*\*Word Count:\*\*** ~3,651

**\*\*Notes:\*\*** So I was really prepared to declare this thing discontinued, even after getting ideas from seeing the second movie and the new seasons of the spinoff show. But I fell into other fandoms and it just didn't seem likely that I would want to continue. But I found a art of a crossover with HTTYD and it had one of my OTPs dancing and singing "For the Dancing and the Dreaming" from the second movie and I couldn't help but listen to it on YouTube. When I listened to it, I suddenly thought of this story and my inspiration slapped me in the face again. Then after reading the amazing comments on the story, I couldn't not give you guys more. I hope you guys haven't abandoned ship yet, because I'm gonna try my best to finish this work.

The next day saw another lesson from Gobber, meaning another reason for Ruffnut to acquire a massive headache. This time they were on the run through a maze, away from the Deadly Nadder. Honestly, if Ruffnut had known this would be what Dragon Training would be like, she would have simply forgone it and trained with her uncle.

But of course, it wasn't going to be like that, so here she was, fleeing from flying, poisonous spikes with her brother hot on her tails. They had only briefly run into Snotlout and seen a glimpse of Astrid, but there was no sign of her husband or Fishlegs.

And when a spat with her brother in front of the Nadder had almost cost them their heads, she realized that she truly needed to get her head in the game. They barely managed to evade the falling walls of the maze, and though Ruffnut had reached to grab Hiccup to pull him aside, her hands slipped away too quickly as her brother shoved her along.

The twins dove behind a pile of rubble for cover, hearing an echoing cry of "\_Hiccup!\_" from Astrid as the walls tumbled down. Ruffnut jumped to her feet, coughing and waving the dust away to see if the two of them were alright...to see Hiccup. And Astrid. \_On top of him.\_

No, no, no, this was unacceptable. Ruffnut nearly threw down her spear to go yank her off before she realized that Astrid would never be doing this on purpose. Besides, by the looks of it, she was desperately trying to pull her axe out of Hiccup's shield (and thank goodness that was there to protect him.) Then, suddenly aware of herself, she realized that the most odd feeling had washed over her.

Ruffnut hadn't really been jealous or anything...had she? No, that was impossible. She didn't feel that way towards Hiccup, truly, she



didn't. She was only just getting to know him after all, though she was aware that he was funny and honest and rather...trustworthy. But there was no way she had feeling for him, that was for certain.

But she did care about him to an extent. The more they talked, the more she could see that he really wasn't as bad as people say he is. In fact, he's not bad at all; he makes her laugh and he's incredibly smart, though incredibly stubborn, but what kind of viking isn't? He treated her like an individual person, not just one half of a whole like everyone else.

Could she really come to feel that way towards him?

"-Is this some kind of a joke to you?!"

The moment she was snapped back to reality, she wanted to punch Astrid in the throat.

"Our parents' war is about to become ours. Figure out which side you're on."

Rage bubbled deep in her belly; hot damn she wanted to yank that girl by her hair, best friend be damned, to give her a piece of her mind. Instead, she stormed up to her, brows furrowed in anger, and knocked the axe out of her hands. The clang of metal hitting stone echoed across the walls of the arena, along with a chorus of gasps.

"Astrid, you're my best friend," Ruffnut began, barely able to keep herself calm. "But if you spew that dragonshit out at him again for things that were out of his control, I'm going to drive my fist so hard into your skull that you won't be seeing anything but stars for the rest of your life." She placed a claw-like hand on the other girl's bicep. "For Odin's sake, he's a human being who makes mistakes. Just let it go."

The effect was instant. Astrid stepped back, brows furrowed and fists clenched. Instead of replying, she turned and exited the arena, grabbing her axe on her way out.

Satisfied, she whipped around at the rest of them. "Well? Anything else you'd like to say?"

They shook their heads. She nodded. "Good."

As the others left, she turned back to Hiccup and gripped his wrist, pulling him up to his feet. "Are you okay?"

He looked a bit shaken, and it made her want to run after Astrid and bash her head in. "Y-yeah...forest?"

She nodded. "Let's go."

\* \* \*

><p>"Why did you do that?" Hiccup inquired as they trekked through the woods, once again searching for the gorge.<p>

Ruffnut fixed him with a leveled gaze. "It would have been wrong not to. She was way out of line and she needed to be told off."

"

"Butâ€¦" Hiccup began, but trailed off when she narrowed her eyes at him. "Yes, ma'am."

The rest of their hike was silent save for the sounds of twigs snapping under their feet and the rustle of branches. Hiccup held tightly onto a new shield and looked to be keeping something in his vest from the way he was holding his side. Ruffnut held her spear upside down and was stabbing it into the ground, using it for leverage when crossing over hills and rocks.

Their plan was simple; Hiccup would go into the gorge and lure the dragon out, coax it into believing he wasn't a threat. Ruffnut would stay behind some rocks a decent distance away, and should the plan fail, she would throw her spear and subdue the dragon before it could kill Hiccup. Hopefully. It wasn't perfect, but it was the most rational one they could think of.

Their arrival was met with silence. The gorge seemed empty, the Night Fury nowhere in sight, and it was a bit worrying. Had it managed to escape, it was likely that it would be long gone by now, and there would be no chance of catching it. Hiccup breathed in deeply and began the trek down into the cove. Ruffnut followed him without a word, both of them nearly slipping on the rocks a few times on their way down.

She pointed to a cluster of rocks on the outer edge of the cove. "I'll take cover over there. Hopefully I won't be too far away if you need help."

The weariness on Hiccup's face made him seem older than he was. "Yeahâ€¦"

She turned to settle into her hiding spot, but she couldn't seem to make her feet move. She turned to look back at him, noted how his hands were shaking a bit. "Be careful, okay?"

He glanced at her, and she smiled so genuinely that he almost did a double take. "I...yeah, I will."

"Promise?" She inquired.

"Promise."

Satisfied, she ducked behind the rocks and settled down behind them, making sure there was enough space between them so she could peer out and watch him stumble in through the rocks. She observed his careful movements as he slunk down further in, shield poised in front of him, and -

Stuck. The shield was stuck. Of course.

She had to muffle her snickers as he attempted to pull it free, but gave up and ducked underneath it. If she squinted, she could see him pull a fish from his vest and hold it out in front of him and he stepped further in, eyes darting around the area, searching.

The further he went, the more tense she became; either the dragon wasn't there or it was hiding, and if it was hiding, it was likely

preparing to attack. She would have to react quickly if she was going to keep it from hurting him, but would it even be enough? What if she was too late? The chief's son would be dead, she would be widowed within months of being married, and she would have no one to blame but herself.

She almost wanted to vomit at how much she was beginning to care about him. She had never wanted to protect someone who wasn't her family in this way before. Why was she getting so worked up about this? Ruffnut Thorston never worried so much. She never worried endlessly about someone's safety, especially not Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III.

At least she never used to.

Though it had only been a few months since they married, Ruffnut could already see she was changing. By the Gods, she was openly defending Hiccup from her friends, she and Hiccup had friendly conversations, they willingly shared a bed with each other every night, Hel, they even sat together in the Great Hall at meals.

She was changing before her very own eyes and she had no idea how to handle it.

Her musings were cut short when a black shape appeared out of the corner of her eye, and she gasped upon spotting the Night Fury slinking out of its hiding spot and approaching her husband slowly, its eyes trained on the fish in his hands. She watched with furrowed eyebrows as Hiccup interacted with it, trying to inch closer to it but jolting back when it hissed. How he could tell that it was hissing at his dagger, she would never know.

Slowly, the dragon inched closer and stretched its neck out, opening its mouth to accept the fish. Hiccup squinted and looked closer at its mouth, muttering something that her ears were able to pick up, but he was cut off when the beast snatched fish out of his hands and gobbled it up whole. Its eyes were immediately trained on the small viking and it continued towards him, so much so that Hiccup had no choice but to stumble back, falling onto his rear and scootching as far away as he could get. That is, until he was met with a boulder blocking his path.

Ruffnut's grip on her spear tightened immensely, and she looked ready to burst from her hiding spot to save him. It was going to eat him or char him to bits, she had to help him -

Except instead of eating him, it regurgitated the fish back into his lap.

Her eyes narrowed in confusion as she watched the display, seeing Hiccup's barely disguised look of disgust and the dragon's almost innocent eyes staring back at him. They darted back and forth between Hiccup's face and the fish it threw up, as if expecting him to eat some too.

She almost blew her cover from laughing when she realized that that was exactly what the Night Fury expected him to do. She came even closer to doing so when she saw him take a bite out of the slimy, raw, spit-slicked fish and be forced to swallow it whilst the dragon watched.

Hiccup, like the dork he is, gave a weak and ridiculous smile that made Ruffnut want to smile too. It was actually...pretty adorable.

Wait.

What.

She slapped her forehead and shook her head vigorously, sending her helmet askew. What in the name of Odin's beard was wrong with her? Had that really come out of her head? She almost wanted to bolt to Gothi's hut and demand to be checked for an illness.

Shaking her head in the way she did caused her helmet to fall crooked, and the imbalance sent it slipping off her head, colliding with the rock she sat next to. The resounding noise caused the dragon to snap to attention, pupils dilated and teeth bared, a ferocious growl sounding from it's throat.

"No, no, no, it's okay!" Hiccup jumped up as Ruffnut had no choice but to poke her head over the rocks to reveal herself. "Look, nothing to be afraid of! It's just my friend!"

The Night Fury leveled her with a furious glare and slinked off to the other end of the cove. The two of them locked eyes and a message went unspoken between them; they weren't giving up just yet.

\* \* \*

><p>The sun was nearly finished setting by the time they returned to the village, exhausted and dreading the meeting with the rest of their dragon training class on the watch tower. Neither of them really wanted to go, and they technically didn't have to, but there was going to be food served and neither of them were in the mood to scale the steps of the Great Hall to get food there. It would just be easier to go and get food there and endure Gobber's stories.<p>

They walked side by side, silent for most of the walk with only the sounds of their footsteps keeping them company. It was difficult to even think of what to say, especially after what they had experienced in the gorge with the Night Fury. After spending time around it, seeing the way it acted if they sat close to it, the way it hung upside down to sleep, the way it understood the concept of drawing to an extent. Or the way it gently nudged Hiccup's palm with its nose, trusting, before slinking off into the shadows once more.

What could they possibly say?

Hiccup shoved his hands underneath his armpits, lips pursed. "So...what do we do? Are we just gonna keep going back and feed it, or...are we gonna actually try to help it?"

"I don't know," Ruffnut shrugged, eyes trained on the ground. "What can we even do to help it? It's not like we can just stick its tail fin back on or anything."

He sighed, because to be frank, she was right. "There has to be something we can do. I...I don't want to be responsible for it starving to death or something."

Ruffnut fixed him with an incredulous look. "And to think a couple of weeks ago you were hellbent on killing a dragon. Now you're actually wanting to help one live."

"If I'm not mistaken," he retorted. "You don't seem to want it to die either."

"You're right, I don't. That's the last thing I want, because there's something going on that no one else has seen in the last three hundred years. Something we might be able to figure out." She sighed and adjusted her helmet. "I'm just as confused as you are, Hiccup, trust me."

"I do!" He blurted out, making them both freeze in their tracks and stare blankly at each other. Uncomfortable silence blanketed them, making the air as thick as billowing smoke from a flame. Hiccup could feel his palms beginning to sweat as he dug his fingernails into the soft skin. He had no idea what to say, how to follow up to his sudden proclamation of trust towards her.

Had he meant it? He didn't have any reason not to. She kept her word and had not told a soul about what they were doing, not even to her brother or to her best friend. In fact, it didn't seem that Ruffnut relayed any sort of conversation they ever had to others. No one went up to him and laughed at him over stupid things he's said in front of her, of his clumsiness, of his complete and utter incompetence on how to hold a conversation without saying anything sarcastic. The only times they teased him were over things that happened in training, things they've seen.

He thought back to her defending him in the ring from Astrid, and realized that she really was trying to make their marriage work. The least he could do, he realized, was actively return the favour.

"Iâ€¦" He began, trying to think of the right words. "I do trust you...a lot more than I ever expected to. And I want you to know that. I trust you, Ruffnut, and you don't have to trust me, but I just wanted you to know that."

She didn't reply, only stared at him as they stood there, halted at the foot of the stairs to the watch tower. The wind whistled around them, and the air tasted faintly of salt from the ocean. Their silence was only interrupted by the familiar voice of his brother-in-law shouting at them from above.

"Hey losers!" He exclaimed, waving a roast chicken on skewer. "If you're done quarreling or making out or whatever it is you married people do, we're waiting for you up here!"

The tension was broken and Hiccup looked ready to bolt up those stairs, but Ruffnut's slender hand on his shoulder halted him as she pulled him to face her.

"I trust you too."

She looked a bit embarrassed to admit it, but he could tell that she was telling the truth, that her admission had been as genuine as his. He nodded and flashed her an awkward, crooked smile before they

climbed their way to the top of the tower, where Gobber and the rest of their class were waiting. Snotlout and Tuffnut were making obnoxious kissing noises at them, but Ruffnut quickly shut them up by bodily shoving Tuffnut off his seat and taking it for herself.

"Oops," she stated, not sounding sorry at all as she grabbed a roast chicken for herself, motioning for Hiccup to sit next to her.

Tuffnut grumbled and Snotlout moved over to let him sit next to his sister on her other side, though he tried to keep some distance between him and Fishlegs as well. Hiccup tried to ignore the way his brother-in-law was almost glaring at him, and grabbed some fish, though the thought of eating any after what had happened today made him feel quite nauseous.

"So," Gobber began, waving his skewer prosthetic in the air. "What lessons did we learn today in training?"

"Nadders can be unpredictable and you should be prepared for anything." Fishlegs supplied.

"Very good, what else?"

"Don't let the sun get in your eyes, or you'll make a fool of yourself." Ruffnut joked, avoiding a jab from Snotlout.

"Oh yeah? Well, Ruffnut gets jealous when other girls fall on her husband," Snotlout retorted, making Hiccup shrink into himself.

"Or when they yell at him," Tuffnut added.

She scoffed and hit Snotlout over the knees with her skewer. "No, Ruffnut gets angry when people go out of their way to torment some poor kid who doesn't screw up on purpose and she thinks that people need to leave him alone."

She furrowed her eyebrows and met the gaze of everyone in her presence, daring them to challenge her on it. Her brother looked confused and almost concerned, Snotlout looked indignant, Fishlegs uncomfortable, and Gobber amused. Astrid had an expression that even Hiccup couldn't deduce.

Gobber cleared his throat. "Anywayâ€¦"

The lesson carried on from there, Gobber talking and the rest of them listening, but Hiccup couldn't really bring himself to listen to much. He tuned in to bits and pieces, but for the most part he zoned out, staring out at the dark horizon, where his father had gone in search of the nest. The lesson soon turned into Gobber telling famous tale of how he lost his hand and foot to dragons. The rest of them seemed quite interested, mostly because they hadn't heard the story before, but Hiccup had heard it plenty of times since becoming the man's apprentice. At this point, he was sure he could recite it word for word without missing a beat.

On his left, Ruffnut had one foot planting on the bench, knee pulled to her chest as she listened intently. She always had a thing for gore stories, he mused, ever since they were little. Her eyes were

glinting in the light of the fire, her bangs occasionally slipping over her eyes when she unconsciously leaned forward in interest.

Hiccup blinked and rubbed his eyes. When had he started paying attention to her like this? When had he started admiring her in such a way? He wasn't attracted to her, he didn't have feelings for her, not at all. But...could he simply be seeing her in a new light? She hadn't at all been what he had expected when they first married, but he could definitely see how she was beginning to change. He could see how their relationship was beginning to change, and it was bizarre to even think about.

But he definitely didn't have feelings for her. Nope, absolutely not.

"Isn't it weird how your hand was inside a dragon?" Fishlegs pondered. "Like, if your mind was still in control of it, you could have killed the dragon from the inside by like, crushing its heart...or something."

"What the Hel," Ruffnut muttered, eyes wide and baffled. Tuffnut covered his mouth to muffle his snort, and they tilted their heads towards each other to whisper and snicker.

Snotlout looked enraged at Gobber's story. "I swear I'm so angry right now," he growled. "I'll avenge your beautiful hand and your beautiful foot. I'll chop off the legs of every dragon I fight, with my face."

'Alright Snotlout, 'Hiccup thought to himself. 'You do that.'

—

Gobber shook his head vehemently. "No, no, it's the wings and the tails you really want. If it can't fly, it can't get away. A downed dragon is a dead dragon."

A downed dragon is a dead dragon.

That statement caught Ruffnut's attention and she turned to look at Hiccup. They both knew what that meant; if they couldn't help that Night Fury fly again, it was as good as dead. But how could they do such a thing when its tail fin was gone?|?

Hiccup's eyes drifted towards Gobber, who was waving his prosthetic arm around once more.

Prosthetic.

He leaned over to Ruffnut, tapping her shoulder to grab her attention briefly. "I'm going to the smithy," he whispered. "I have an idea. Don't wait up, okay?"

He didn't give her any time to reply before he was gone, slipping down the stairs and sprinting towards the smithy.

He would return home in the wee hours of the morning, covered in soot and grinning. She was fast asleep already, so he didn't bother waking her up to tell her the good news.

It could wait until morning.

End  
file.